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Reading Education Report No. 35

A DESCRIPTION OF READING INSTRUCTION: THE TAIL IS WAGGING THE DOG

Jana Mason

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

August 1982

Center for the Study of Reading

READING EDUCATION REPORTS

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Abstract

Observations of third and fourth grade classroom reading lessons reveal not only that text-related reading comprehension is seldom taught but also that a coordinated or topically organized sequence of text reading instruction is lacking. Possible reasons for these practices are discussed.

A Description of Reading Instruction:

A Tail is Wagging the Dog

Observation of classroom reading instruction is generally devoted to an investigation of the amount of time teachers and students spend on various tasks and activities. This sort of analysis, while suggestive of what occurs during a reading period, does not indicate how instruction proceeds, that is, how it is ordered, and whether that order is coherent and has a thematic structure. However, an analysis of the sequence of instruction can provide information beyond what is taught to how it is taught, lending insights into the adequacy of its organization.

The question of how reading instruction proceeds is relevant for two reasons. First, there is a need to explain the apparent contradictions between what is taught and what is believed ought to be taught. Survey research indicates that teachers believe that reading comprehension ought to be emphasized by fourth grade (Austin & Morrison, 1963; Martin & Chambers, 1974; Mason & Osborn, 1982). However, observational research indicates that little reading comprehension is taught in elementary school (Durkin, 1979). An analysis of instructional sequences may help to explain why comprehension instruction occurs infrequently. Second, there is a resurgent interest in understanding why low achieving students make such slow progress in learning to read. Recent explanations have centered on the instruction. For example, McDermott and Aron (1978) have shown that students in low achieving reading groups obtain less well coordinated lessons than do other students. Collins and Michaels (1980) found correction procedures during reading lessons to favor high achieving students. Mason and Osborn

(1982) determined from teachers' self reports that low achieving students receive phonics and word-level comprehension instruction but very little text-level comprehension instruction while high achieving students receive more comprehension instruction than phonics instruction.

An apparent problem with present day reading instruction is that it involves more word level practice than directed analysis of texts (Durkin, 1979; Mason & Osborn, 1982). This practice occurs despite the fact that comprehension activity has long been assumed central to reading instruction, as indicated in the following quotations by eminent reading educators:

> [A reading program] should not consist of a mere aggregation of disconnected activities, but it should be, as Dewey says, 'a serial or consecutive course of doings, held together within the unity of progressively growing occupation or project.' (Gates, 1930, p. 114)

> As soon as pupils have learned to read simple materials independently [stories with vocabularies of about 150 words], . . . the chief aims [of instruction] are to deepen interest in reading both for pleasure and for information; to extend interests of pupils through guided and independent reading; to promote rapid growth in ability to secure a clear, accurate understanding of what is read; to develop the habit of reaching thoughtfully to ideas acquired and of using them in clarifying, solving problems, and developing right attitudes; . . . (Gray, 1956, p. 136)

While the early work by Gray and Gates (some of which was summarized in 1928 by Zirbes) indicates what ought to be taught, how it ought to be sequenced is less clear; listings are far more common than orderings. Betts (1950) suggested a sequencing but, as is evident from the following summary (in which numerous subheadings that Betts listed have been omitted

here), far more is indicated than a teacher would typically have time to carry out.

Five steps to directed reading activity:

(1) developing readiness by insuring an adequate background of experience and concepts, by stimulating interest, and by identifying a general motive for reading;

(2) guiding the first silent reading

(3) developing word recognition skills and comprehension;

(4) rereading; and

(5) following up the book reading with projects or activities.

A more parsimonious sequence, comprised of three components, has been suggested by Au (1979):

> In an E or experience sequence, the teacher has the children discuss experiences they have had, or knowledge they have, which is related in some way to the story . . .
>
> After this first part of the lesson, in which the children share their experiences, the teacher has them read short parts of the story, usually a page or two, asking them questions about the content after each section is read. These are the T or text sequences . . .
>
> The final category is the R or relationship sequence. In R sequences the teacher attempts to draw relationships for the children between the content of the story discussed in the T sequences and their outside experience and knowledge.

It will be assumed here that Au has suggested a minimal or core instructional sequence for effective reading comprehension instruction, namely a child-related introduction of the text, followed by reading, and then discussion and interpretation of text content. This ordered set of

three text-related events, which is being tested and shows promise of being effective (Au, Tharp, Crowell, Jordan, Spiedel, & Calkins, 1982), will serve as the working model for the research to follow.

The intent of the present study is to determine whether there is a typical instructional sequence in third and fourth grade classrooms, to what extent the core text-related sequence is utilized, and if not used what instructional sequences are provided.

Method

Subjects

Reading instruction was observed in 10 third and 10 fourth grade classrooms, each on three occasions. Classrooms were located in seven schools in a medium sized industrial city. One school was in a lower income neighborhood; the other six were in middle income neighborhoods. Participating teachers were chosen by the central administration as being good teachers and not likely to be upset by being observed. The observed teachers were cooperative and did not appear to change their teaching practices while under observation.

Procedure

The data for this study are derived from observations collected by Mason and Osborn (1982). Classrooms in third and fourth grade were observed by two retired teachers during hour-long fixed reading periods. Observers kept a record of what was taught, how it was taught, what materials were being used, how many students were being instructed together, and the time spent on each. The original coding sheets were transcribed into verbal

descriptions by two people and then checked against the coding sheets by the author. In most instances the original data were sufficiently detailed for construction of event sequences, because classroom observers had been instructed to code every topic, material or procedural change made by the teacher while she was working with a group of children. In a few instances, observers had made very general statements or had not identified satisfactorily the nature of a workbook exercise. However, because the point of this analysis was to show the overall sequence of reading instruction, the loss of such details could be presumed immaterial.

After writing out the coded lessons, individual events were transcribed with each event separated by an arrow. When the entire class was taught as a single unit, one running account of events sufficed (Teacher 20, in appendix). When two or more groups were taught during a reading period, running accounts of each group were recorded (Teacher 16, in appendix). Occasions when the teacher sent a group to their seats to work, or when everyone was working at their seats were recorded as the event, "independent work." These events served as primary data for identification of classroom organization patterns, of type and frequency of text-reading instruction sequences, and of the relationship between text-reading instruction sequences and the lessons as a whole.

Results

Classroom Organization for Reading Instruction

Sequential patterns for instruction could be affected by the overall classroom organization pattern. Hence, the first question had to concern

organization. The data were scanned for common patterns and differences. Two instructional patterns were identified. One, which prevailed for 15 of the 20 teachers (9 third grade, 6 fourth grade) is to divide the students by ability into two or three groups. The teacher meets with each group for about 15 to 20 minutes (though one teacher on one occasion worked with the entire class for the whole period and two teachers instructed the whole class briefly before working with small groups). With this type of organization, mini-groups are constituted within the classroom with each group reading different stories, working on different assignments, and receiving different lessons. Almost all instruction occurs in these small groups. The other instructional approach, used here by 5 of the teachers (1 third grade, 4 fourth grade), is to alternate between teaching the entire class and working with individuals. With this approach most students read the same text, carry out similar workbook assignments, and receive instruction as a class. Students are given assistance on an individual basis (see Table 1 for data summary).

Insert Table 1 about here.

With both approaches, most instruction is directed to groups of students rather than to individuals. In this sample, for example, all but one teacher spent at least 60% of the reading period with small or whole class groups, rather than with individuals, and 11 spent 90% or more time with groups. However, one teacher (Teacher 20) spent only 4% of the period instructing groups.

Lesson Event Sequences

There appear to be few precedents for constructing and analyzing event sequences of reading instruction. The three components offered by Au (1979) as well as those by Betts (1950) suggests that there are five types of text-related events: (1) activities for analyzing or recognizing words from the text; (2) activities dealing with meanings of text words, in or out of context; (3) activities surrounding the introduction of the text; (4) activities involving silent or oral text reading; and (5) activities involving discussion of the text. These five categories served to classify all text-related events; the last three represent Au's core sequence. All other events were left unclassified and labeled, "text-unrelated events."

In order to make statements and judgments about the type as well as quality of instruction, lesson events were tabulated by grade, classroom organization, and level of competence of the reading groups being instructed (competence was determined by the grade level of the reading text: above, at, or below students' assigned grade). The competence comparison analysis showed no differences so is not discussed. The moderate grade differences will be discussed later. Classroom organization differences depend on the unit of analysis. When the unit is the reading period (upper portion of Table 2), it is apparent that more events per reading period take place when teachers are using a small group approach (8 to 10 events per period) than when using a whole class approach (4 to 6 events per period). However, if one considers reading instruction from the student's point of view (the lesson given the student), then the proper unit is the number of events that each group of students receives (lower portion of Table 2). From this

perspective, there are no consistent differences in organization, as the number of events per lesson varies from 4 to 5 or 6 in both.

Insert Table 2 about here.

Sequence of Instruction

Lesson sequences were identified by writing out all event sequences that were related to textbook reading and that had occurred during instruction or were noted as being assigned for seatwork. If a text unrelated activity was inserted between portions of a text-related sequence, that break was interpreted to indicate the separation of a sequence into two separate sequences.

Once the text-related events were labeled, they were coded with the numbers 1 through 5. (One denoted word recognition, 2, word meaning, 3, text introduction, 4, reading, and 5, text discussion.) The 3, 4, 5 sequence was assumed to describe the core or basic reading lesson, as defined earlier. The decision to place word recognition and word meaning events first rather than last is an arbitrary decision and is unrelated to later interpretations.

Unexpectedly, only 5 sequences from the 130 lessons within the 60 reading periods included the 3, 4, 5 core. Sequences which occurred more frequently contained only part of the core. There were 22 instances of the 4, 5 sequence (reading and discussing the text), 11 instances with a 3, 4 sequence (introducing and reading the text), and 12 instances of other one- or two-event partial sequences. Table 3 presents the text-related sequences found, grouped as described above, using two ways to count their frequency--according to the number of times a sequence occurred (instances) and

according to the number of times each event within a sequence appeared (events). For example, because the 1, 4, 5 sequence occurred three times and is made up of three events, there are 3 instances but a total of 9 events associated with it.

Insert Table 3 about here.

Table 4 summarizes the data from Table 3 in terms of sequence instances; Table 5 summarizes the data in terms of sequence events. The data are separated by grade because third grade teachers more often followed reading with a discussion while fourth grade teachers more often introduced the text. Table 4 shows that although some type of text reading sequence occurs in most reading periods (.90 in third grades, .77 in fourth grades), it occurs in half or less than half of students' instructional lessons (.42 in third grades, .51 in fourth grades). Thus, while teachers usually present some text-based reading instruction during every reading period, they do not typically provide it to every reading group. Table 5 shows that when the number of events within a sequence is tabulated, the proportion is even lower. Text-related sequences take only .24 of all instructional events. Further, the events from the core sequence occur for less than .04 of all events. Of the individual text-related events, almost .05 are devoted to text preparation, about .10 to text reading, about .05 to post-reading discussion, and about .05 to text-related word recognition or word meaning.

Insert Tables 4 and 5 about here.

Discussion

The first analysis, that of the effect of classroom organization on instructional events, determined that while there are two easily identified organizational patterns, these have little effect on the number of events if the unit of analysis is the number of events for each instructed group rather than the number of events during each reading period. In other words, teachers tend to engage in about four to six instructional moves for each group whether they are instructing the whole class or a smaller group. While this result suggests that there may be instructional characteristics that are independent of group size, its import here is simply that differences in events as a function of organizational pattern can be overlooked, so long as the activity given to each group is the principal unit of analysis.

The analyses that are central to this study appear in Tables 3, 4, and 5. Table 3 shows that all the text-related sequences can be categorized as a limited set of four types, those which use the 3, 4, 5 core, those which use the ending 4, 5 sequence, those which use the beginning 3, 4 sequence, and those which neither introduce nor follow up on text reading. It is apparent that most classroom lessons do not contain complete text-related sequences. Teachers have either omitted the introduction or discussion or have interjected text-unrelated events within the core sequence.

Table 4 shows instances of sequences in terms of the reading period and then of the lesson to reading groups. If the number of reading periods is the unit of analysis, text-based sequences appear to play a predominant role in reading instruction (.83 of all reading periods). When instruction to each group of children is the unit of analysis, however, the proportion

of text-related sequences to the number of lessons is barely half (.46). It is the latter analysis, of course, that is most relevant to the issue of what instruction students receive. Even with the generous allowance for any text-related sequence, it is apparent that students are not led through a series of text-related activities on a daily basis.

The right-hand column of Table 5 presents the same information but in terms of the use of the text related sequence events compared to all events. Now the occurrence of any set of text-related events is infrequent and the core sequence is seldom evident. While these low proportions may be due in part to the continued reading of one text for several days, thus making an introduction less essential or a discussion less pertinent, the fact that even incomplete text-related sequences are infrequent suggests a serious flaw in classroom reading instruction.

A Possible Explanation

While it is clear that text-related instruction does not play a large role in the lesson, what is happening? Seventy-five percent to 80% of instructional events involve giving directions for, supervising the filling in of, or checking the accuracy of worksheets or of lists of words placed on a chalkboard, instead of introducing, reading and discussing texts. Most instruction is comprised of text-unrelated exercises from workbooks or skill sheets that are intended in a skill-based way to teach reading. The variety of purpose and high frequency of these tasks seem to contribute to the disconnectedness of lessons.

Here are two examples which show the disconnected nature of lessons. One teacher began a lesson by having students read examples of their

answers in a workbook exercise and then discussed with them how time and place could be indicated in a story (19 minutes). These activities were followed by having students read through a list of words (1 minute), having them read and interpret workbook directions on word meaning and read and interpret workbook directions on a story recall task (15 minutes). Then she introduced a play with questions about how to pronounce some of the words. It was followed by a brief definition of a play and checking of students' knowledge about Christopher Columbus (7 minutes). During the remaining 16 minutes, students read the play silently while the teacher corrected workbook exercises.

Another teacher began a lesson by having students locate places that were going to be read about on a map, using the textbook index to identify names of places (16 minutes). She gave them a physical exercise break (2 minutes), introduced new words from the story, and gave them directions for an unrelated worksheet exercise (8 minutes). Students then located and read the story (13 minutes), listened to worksheet directions (1 minute), and carried out the task of writing answers to story questions (15 minutes).

Problem of Establishing Coherent Instructional Sequences

In both third and fourth grade, even with the whole class instruction approach, which allows more time for directed learning and could be used to develop well-coordinated sequences, there is no indication that text-related reading is highlighted. Instead, there is massive reliance on workbook exercises. The exercises not only take away time from analysis

or discussion of stories but also are inserted between text-related events. This practice probably hinders or discourages attention to text comprehension. Whereas workbooks were originally meant to support reading, they are now the main focus.

Perhaps the explanation for the heavy use of workbooks is that teachers have become obligated to use these materials. Workbooks and skill sheets have been purchased by the district. Principals expect them to be used. Parents expect their children to bring them home. For nearly everyone, they serve as the symbol of effort and accomplishment. Hence, more often than not they are used several times every day. But they take instructional time. Teachers and students need to discuss topics that are presented as work exercises and often also to go over the task procedure. Some exercises are so difficult that teachers must work several items with the students. In most cases exercises must be checked for completion and accuracy. Follow-up review is occasionally required. The result is that there is little time left for reading and interpreting, predicting, evaluating, or analyzing a story or informative text. There is little time to ask students what they know about a text or to give them useful introductory information. There is hardly even time for them to read under the teacher's supervision.

Workbook tasks were originally intended to make the teaching of reading a little easier by providing follow-up practice while students were working independently. They have all but taken over the whole reading instruction period. The tail is now wagging the dog.

Suggestions for Change

As the author summarized and studied the transcripts, a number of ideas came to mind that might permit teachers to use reading periods more productively. The ideas to follow are by no means unique or complete, but are intended to inspire the dedicated teacher to create even better solutions to the problems of lesson discontinuity, insufficient attention to text-reading, and over-dependence on worksheet instruction.

It is assumed that the most effective way to help students learn to read, understand what they read, and learn to use text information is to read and interpret texts under the teacher's supervision. This suggests that teachers should make sure that every group of students has time every day to have introduced, to read, and to discuss a text with the teacher's help. A conservative estimate of the time required is about 15 minutes per group or half or more of each reading lesson. Such a commitment would have at least three effects: One is that teachers could organize a coherent theme and a sequence of instructional events around the topic of the story or informational text being read, bringing out its usefulness or interest to students. However, they will need to develop their own organization because lessons in guidebooks do not usually feature text-coordinated sequences. A second is that teachers would need to choose from available worksheet exercises, omitting ones which take more preparation time, are instructionally less relevant, or are too easy or too difficult for their students (see Osborn, 1981, for suggestions). A third effect is that teachers would need to figure out more efficient ways to organize and evaluate work; the introduction and correction of routine work often takes a large amount of lesson time.

Here are some suggestions about the last point. Teaching efficiency might be improved in the following ways:

1. Analyses of the Mason and Osborn transcripts indicated that word meaning activities take a great deal of instructional time. Many teachers have students look up and discuss word meanings during the lesson. Why not place lists of new story words on the blackboard at the beginning of each week? Direct students to look them up on their own and learn them through definition, writing or some other means. Assign students to be pronunciation helpers for a week and/or go over the words quickly in a whole class choral reading session. Give weekly tests of students' ability to define and put the words into context.

2. Another time-consuming activity was worksheet direction-giving. After the teacher has winnowed out poorly conceived tasks, students ought to be taught how to read and interpret worksheet directions, perhaps by learning to name and classify types of task procedures. Then students can refer to chalkboard notices of tasks and begin work without additional instruction.

3. It was apparent that many teachers used instructional time to check and review students' answers to worksheet tasks. Checking and correcting ought to be done by teachers in the after-school work period, not during reading. If students cannot correct their own work, teachers should analyze students' errors, figure out the problem and then find remedial assignments. Recorrecting errors is usually a wasted effort for everyone.

4. Tasks such as drawing a picture to illustrate a story or a word meaning were occasionally inserted into reading lessons. But since even first graders can be taught to write sentences and stories and since drawing is not an effective way to teach about reading, drawing tasks probably serve as time-filling work and should be avoided during the reading period.

5. Some teachers tried to include creative writing assignments with reading. While these assignments can be an effective way to replace worksheet exercises, teachers usually had students read aloud their sentences or stories during the reading instruction period. One teacher, for example, had students take turns reading their written stories aloud, then they chose the three best and reread those. This took all of their reading time. As an alternative, students could be assigned partners and read aloud their written productions to each other. Upon receiving guidance from the teacher about how to be a critic, some could even try to improve their own or their partner's productions.

Conclusion

Do third and fourth grade teachers provide text-related reading comprehension? If the question concerns what each group receives, then the answer is not very often. While teachers provide some reading instruction to about half of their groups every day, the instruction is quite limited in nature. They spend more time and involve more instruction in worksheet exercises than reading. Reading periods more often feature word level exercises than text-level activities. As a result, few activities revolve around relating, interpreting or analyzing stories.

Does text-related instruction follow the presumed minimal sequence of an introduction, directed reading, and discussion? Very seldom. More often a hurried introduction to a story is sandwiched between discussions of several workbook exercises and an assignment for students to read the story at their seats. Either an introduction or a follow-up discussion is often omitted.

Reading lessons lack not only a coherent odering of instructional activities but also attention to text-related reading events. There is little indication that text-level concepts are being built upon or expanded upon or even that any one part of the lesson logically precedes or follows another. Because text-related sequences are frequently interrupted by worksheet exercises and because the proportion of text-related events to all lesson events is so low, the source of the problem appears to be a supercedence of skill-based workbook activity over the comprehension, interpretation and evaluation of written information and stories. What began as an aid to classroom learning has taken over as the principal source of learning. The problem is that while workbook exercises may help children learn to decode and to understand words and short paragraphs, they do not replace story and informational text-reading events. They do not replace teacher-aided analysis of texts. And it is difficult to see how they can help students to learn from texts. What they do is take away students' time for reading and learning to comprehend text materials.

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APPENDIX

Recoded Observation (Teacher 16, Grade 4)

Observation 1 (4/5)

Group	# of Students	# of Minutes	Activity
X		10	Students read their assignments as they arrive in the room and begin work.
Low		6	T reads then explains assignment to read quotations.
Mid	17	12	T reviews meaning of summary, and discusses form of outline. Children suggest details to be included in outline.
Mid	17	12	T gives directions for 6 workbook exercises from Lizard to Start With uses many examples. Included are writing story summary and identifying prefixes.
Low	5	5	T has students pronounce hard words (from story on board)
Low	5	11	T has students put the hard words into sentences.
Low	5	8	T has students read sentences among the stories, and identify who made the statement, then find proof for their answer. Story is in How it is Nowadays.
Low	5	6	T listens to students read their WB answers about sequence and author's purpose.
Seatwork:	Prefixes, writing story summary, outlining story, determining source of quotes.		

Observation 2 (4/10)

X	23	7	Students read their assignments as they arrive.
Low	5	2	T gives directions for seatwork.
Mid	17	2	T reviews corrections in papers returned to students.
Mid	17	4	T reviews historical background of a story being read in Lizard to Start With and talks about meaning of historical fiction.
Mid	17	1	T discusses names of characters put on the board.

Observation 2 (Cont'd)

Group	# of Students	# of Minutes	Activity
Mid	17	13	Students find new words in story. They read sentences including those words.
Mid	17	3	T gives reading assignments including Weekly Reader handout.
Low	5	3	T works on vocabulary words from the story. Meanings are given, students find the appropriate word from a list.
Low	5	3	T directs oral reading.
Low		8	Students discuss answers to questions from story.
Low	5	7	T has students do more oral reading and then answer oral questions.

Seatwork: Reading, answering story questions, editing summaries, consonant clusters.

Observation 3 (4/20)

X		10	T has children read silently, returns papers, discusses them w/individual children and puts words on chalkboard, and makes assignments.
Low	5	2	T checks that students completed assignment.
Low	5	7	T goes over assignment on word meanings on ditto page with children. Gives word attack exercise assignment. Gives word meaning workbook assignmnet.
Low	5	2	T has students read nonsense poem on ditto sheet.
Low	5	2	T assigns students to draw picture about poem.
Mid	18	1	T discusses pages children checked.
Mid	18	11	T works w/students on identification of adj., adv., and modified words.
Mid	18	10	New words on board, T has students locate them in story and look up their meaning in the glossary.

Observation 3 (Cont'd)

Group	# of Students	# of Minutes	Activity
	18	12	T has students recall historical facts, then tell something they had learned from their silent reading, and answer questions about the story.
Mid	18	2	T gives writing assignment to write their dreams of their future lives and to do a workbook exercise on story details.
Low	5	7	T goes over seatwork answers to a crossword puzzle in which words end in lt
Low	5	1	Students read words aloud.

Seatwork: Writing, answering story questions, drawing, word puzzle, reading.

Transcription (Teacher No. 16)

Lesson No. 1, Low Group: Assignment of locating quotations in story → independent work → check workbook answers about sequence and author's purpose

Middle Group: Independent work → review summarizing → discuss outlining → directions for 6 workbook assignments → independent work

Lesson No. 2, Low Group: Directions for seatwork → independent work → word meaning from story → oral reading → discuss story

Middle Group: Independent work → check workbook work → introduces story with discussion of text genre → introduces story characters → locates new story words → directions for seatwork → independent work (includes story reading)

Lesson No. 3, Low Group: Independent work → check workbook work → word meaning directions → word attack directions → work meaning directions → oral reading → directions for drawing picture about text → independent work → → check workbook answers.

Middle Group: Independent work → check workbook work → grammar exercise → discuss story word meanings → discuss story → directions for writing assignment → directions for workbook exercise on story details → independent work.

Recoded Observation (Teacher 20, Grade 4)

Observation 1 (5/10)

Group	# of Students	# of Minutes	Activity
X		5	Students assemble from other rooms and pass out workbooks
X		5	Teacher goes over workbook errors with individuals.
X		9	Students read SRA comic style books then fill out blanks on ditto sheets as teacher helps individuals.
EC	22	1	T gives further reading and workbook assignments,
X		20	T helps individuals.

Seatwork: Reading, word attack

Observation 2 (5/15)

X		5	Students assemble then re-read story in With Skies & Wings
EC	23	2	Students are asked recall questions from story.
X		43	Students work in workbooks on word meaning and sentence interpretation exercises.

Seatwork: Word meaning, answering story questions.

Observation 3 (5/17)

EC	23	2	Children check workbooks for completion.
X		48	Children work independently with SRA comic style books then fill out ditto sheets.

Seatwork: Word meaning, sequences, summary, word attack, study skills, answering story questions.

Transcription

Lesson No. 1, Entire class: Independent work → check workbook answers → assignments → independent work.

Lesson No. 2, Entire class: Reread story → discuss story → independent work.

Lesson No. 3, Entire class: Check workbooks → independent work.

Table 1

Use of Two Classroom Organization Patterns in Third and Fourth Grade Reading Instruction Periods

Small Group Instruction Approach	Grade three Nine teachers	Grade four Six teachers
Small group lessons	20	18
Whole class lessons	1	0
Combined organization	6	0
Whole class Instructional Approach	**One teacher**	**Four teachers**
Small group lessons	0	0
Whole class lessons	3	12
Combined organization	0	0
Number of Reading Periods	30	30

Table 2

Instructional Events as a Function of

Classroom Organization and Grade

	Grade Three			Grade Four		
	Events	Reading Periods	Ratio	Events	Reading Periods	Ratio
Small Group Organization	171	20	8.55	182	18	10.11
Entire Class Organization	26	4	6.50	52	12	4.33
Combined Organization	56	6	9.33	0	0	--
Total	253	30		234	30	
	Events	Group Lesson	Ratio	Events	Group Lesson	Ratio
Small Group Organization	171	41	4.17	182	33	5.52
Entire Class Organization	26	4	6.50	52	12	4.33
Combined Organization	56	20	2.80	0	0	--
Total	253	65		234	45	

Table 3

Type and Frequency of Text-Reading Sequences*

	Total Instances	Total Events
Events in which a text is introduced, read, and discussed		
3 → 4 → 5	3	9
3 → 4 → 5 → 2 → 5	1	5
3→2→4 → 5	1	4
	5	18
Events in which a text is read and discussed		
4 → 5	10	20
1 → 4 → 5	3	9
2 → 4 → 5	4	12
4 → 5 → 4 → 5	2	8
4→2→5	1	3
4 → 5 → 2	1	3
4 → 5 → 2 → 5	1	4
	22	59
Events in which a text is introduced and read		
3 → 4	7	14
3 → 4 → 2	1	3
2 → 3 → 4	1	3
3→1→4	2	6
	11	26
Other reading sequences		
1 → 4	2	4
2 → 4	1	2
4	8	8
4 → 2	1	2
	12	16

*1 = word recognition; 2 word meaning; 3 = introduction to text; 4 = oral or silent reading; 5 = discussion of text

Table 4

Relationship of Text-Related Sequences to

Reading Periods and Group Lessons

Sequence Type	Grade Three	Grade Four	Combined
Introduction/reading/ discussion (3, 4, 5)	2	3	5
Reading/discussion (4, 5)	17	5	22
Introduction/reading (3, 4)	2	9	11
Other (partial sequences)	6	6	12
Total, text-related sequences	27	23	50
Number of reading periods	30	30	60
Proportion in reading periods	.900	.767	.833
Number of group lessons	65	45	110
Proportion in group lessons	.415	.511	.455

Table 5

Relationship of Text-Reading Events

to All Lesson Events

Sequence Type	Grade Three	Grade Four	Combined	
	Number of Events	Number of Events	Number of Events	Proportion of all events
Introduction/reading/ discussion	6	12	18	.037
Reading/discussion	43	16	59	.121
Introduction/reading	6	20	26	.053
Other/partial sequences	8	8	16	.033
Total text-related events	63	56	119	.244
Total text-unrelated events	190	178	368	.756